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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TOP PRIORITIES, RIDLEY-THOMAS TELLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GROUP

Building a strong economic development agenda that includes job creation, small business assistance programs, capital investments and enhancing educational opportunities are key priorities, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas told an audience of business and civic leaders at the monthly Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce “Pancakes and Politics” breakfast Friday.

“Elected officials must be accountable to their constituents and produce tangible results,” he told the group. “Economic development and increasing educational opportunities are the most effective ways a community can be lifted up. I am dedicated to ensuring these two important goals come together to improve the quality of life for all residents.”

Among the most important goals is directing county investments in ways that create jobs, such as the construction of the Crenshaw-to-LAX light rail line. Through project labor agreements, a percentage of the workers hired are from the local community.

One of the most effective, long term approaches to stimulating business sectors includes creating hubs where technology and research intersect. For example, The Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute located at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center near Carson is one of the nation's leading non-profit biomedical research institutes with a mission to establish and attract biomedical companies to the campus and surrounding area.

In an increasingly competitive world where technology and education determine career opportunities, Chairman Ridley-Thomas stressed the importance of adult work force development and early childhood education, such as funding for pre-school age educational programs like First Five Los Angeles' Early Childhood Education, investing in public libraries such as the newly built East Rancho Dominguez library and making sure that adult work force training dollars are spent on programs with an effective track record. Another notable education program that has been implemented is the Children's Defense Fund Freedom School program which is curriculum based and focuses on improving reading skills, building self-esteem and a love of learning. Several schools throughout the Second District participated in the Freedom Schools program this summer, in addition to a new 5-week pilot program at two Los Angeles County Juvenile Probation camps.

The Chairman also stressed the importance of assisting small businesses, such as the Small Business Loss Mitigation Program currently under consideration by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to help small businesses in the Park Mesa Heights corridor that will be affected by the upcoming light rail line construction.

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